

The LAY-MONK.

Uter est insanior horum?

Hor.

From MONDAY, January 11. to WEDNESDAY, January 13. 1713.

IN a former Paper, predominant Judgment and Discretion were settled as the Limits that circumscribe the Man of Sense and the genuine Wit, and distinguish them from others of a different Nature and Denomination. If you pass this Frontier, you enter into a wide uncultivated Region, an intellectual *Africa*, that abounds with an endless Variety of monstrous and irregular Minds. These absurd Understandings are the Errors and Deviations of Nature in the Formation of the Head, where thousands are incompleat to one that is brought to Perfection.

Infinite is the Variety of these Tribes of Men, that are destitute of good Sense and Judgment. Fops, Half-Wits, Pedants and Coxcombs, which are the general Heads, are divided and subdivided into numberless Branches, all diversify'd by their peculiar Oddnesses and specifick Caprices: 'Tis extremely difficult to trace essential Differences among regular Beings, but 'tis much more so to settle the Boundaries that divide one Species from another among these anomalous Productions; their constituent Whimsies are so very delicate and abstruse, that perhaps they often consist in the improper Length, Size or Situation of a Fibre in the Brain, in a disproportion'd Humour, or an immoderate Ferment in the Composition. But to gratify the Curious, I shall attempt to deduce the Pedegree of some of the most eminent Clans.

When the Madman and the Fool meet in the same Complexion, while the former enlivens and

refines the latter, and the latter reduces and qualifies the former, the Production is a Coxcomb, or a meer Wit, which are multiply'd into numerous Kinds, as their Ingredients meet in various Proportions, or are more slightly or more intimately blended and combin'd. From these different Complications arises the distinguishing Disparity, that is found among the numerous subordinate Classes of these ambiguous Animals, to which the rational and irrational World equally pretend. Such are the several Tribes of the half-craz'd, the Impertinents, the Pedants, the perpetual Talkers, the Men of Form, the Masters of insignificant Eloquence, and the Affected, which includes an Under-Species, equally disagreeable, of those who with visible Affectation labour to appear unaffected.

If the Madman has the Superiority in the Mixture, a Progeny is produc'd of shining Fops, Poetasters, petulant Laughers, and morose false Critics. If the Fool prevails, and keeps the Madman under, you have a surprizing Race of crafty Blockheads, who are senseless in Conversation, yet cunning in their Actions, and cheat us daily under the Appearance of Stupidity. Hence too proceeds a Species of Men, who having only a Sprinkling of Genius in their Composition, are always aiming at fine Things, and disturbing the Company with insipid Raillery.

As oft as the Balance of Power between the Madman and the Fool is broken, according to their

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their different Degrees of Superiority on either Side, a new Set of these capricious Animals is brought into Being, whose common Nature is more vary'd by their several whimsical Properties, than the Ape or Monkey Kind, which imitate this irregular Race of Men, as much as these Men resemble others, who are endow'd with true Genius and good Sense.

These Reflections bring to my Thoughts a Story which I have somewhere read, of a young Gentleman in the Court of *France*, during the Reign, as I remember, of *Henry the Third*. This Person being of a graceful Aspect, of great Humanity and obliging Behaviour, was belov'd by all, notwithstanding that his little Share of Sense made his Conversation low and trifling. It happen'd, I cannot recollect by what Accident, that this Gentleman grew distracted; and then the Ferments of the Madman having agitated and exalted the flegmatick Fool, he became an ingenious and pleasant Companion. The Court was mightily pleas'd, and engag'd the King's Physician to undertake his Cure. The Gentleman by the Doctor's Prescriptions soon recover'd, but the Fool recover'd with him; his shining Parts were sunk and effac'd, and his Head reduc'd to its original Softness.

As in the Instances I have given of the various Compositions, where Judgment and Discretion are no Ingredients, the Fool and the Madman are so thoroughly mixt, as to make a compound Being different in Kind from either of the combining Principles, so it falls out that the Union of them in some Constitutions is so slight and loose, that like Wine and Oil but gently shook together, they are not perfectly blended and incorporated, but still preserve their distinct Natures. The Fool and the Madman are not here so entirely united and consolidated, as to make a Compound of a different Appellation; but in this Confusion, rather than Mixture, the Principles easily separate. This defective Composition produces an inconsistent Race of Men, which may be denominated Lunatick Wits, in whose slack Contexture the Madman breaking loose from the Fool, and the Fool disengag'd from the Madman, often appear entire and uncompounded, or at least in a great measure free from Allay. In this Complexion the Madman and the Fool seem to have compromis'd their Differences; and being determin'd to act independently, share the Government of the Man between them. The Madman, as Sovereign, takes Possession of the Brain, and rules the Imagination, whence arise that Acuteness of Thought, Quickness of Apprehension, those surprising Turns of Wit, and that entertaining Humour, which are almost peculiar to this Species. The Provinces where the Fool has Dominion, are the various Concerns and Affairs of Life; in which he acts as uncontroul'd, and shines as conspicuous,

as the Lunatick does among the intellectual Powers. Hence it comes to pass, that the speculative Wisdom and the practical Folly of this Tribe, illustrating and improving one another are both admirable; and that famous Expression may justly be apply'd to them, *They never speak a silly Thing, and never do a wise one.*

It is from the Contemplation of this Species, that a known Observation has been made, That *all great Wits have a Tincture of Madness*. The Reason of this Remark, I imagine is, because that as in Proportion there are greater Numbers of Wits of this Kind, than of any other, so they are likewise the most eminent for sprightly Imagination, agreeable Strains of Raillery, and genteel Satyr. A Wit of the Lunatick Kind has Spirits so expanded and inflam'd, that one Heat more had made him a *George Fox* or a *James Nayler*; and the Transition is very easy from the Frontier of this Tribe to the Colledge in *Moorfields*. While a Man of Wit of this Class has so much of the flegmatick Principle in his Make as bridles the Lunatick, no Genius is more admirable either in Conversation or Writing; but such are his Inequalities, and so many Excursions from Sense appear in the Conduct of his Life, that 'tis evident his Composition is inconsistent and extravagant.

All these Ranks of absurd Productions in the Rational World, which I have mention'd, agree, as has been said, in one general Notion, namely, Indiscretion and Privation or Absence of Judgment; but the peculiar Properties and curious Particularities, which by a wonderful Fertility produce subaltern Orders, are innumerable; for Error and Deviation is infinite; and no Mind is endow'd with sufficient Sagacity to penetrate the minutest Recesses of Nature, unravel the odd Complications of disagreeing Principles, and tell where one Species of Coxcombs ends, and a new one begins.

This is the Province of the Comick Poet, and perhaps no Nation on Earth furnishes him with a greater Variety of Originals, or more surprising, ridiculous and whimsical Characters to be expos'd on the Stage, than our own Island; which is, I believe, the Reason that the *British* Theatre affords more Entertainment of this Kind than any of our Neighbours, who in Comparison of us are indigent of such Distinctions and Particularities.

A stupid Ideot, or a downright distracted Man, are Objects of Compassion, not of Raillery and Derision. A considerable, tho' inferior Degree of Sense is requir'd to set off a Coxcomb, and make a Half-Wit eminently ridiculous; and this is the Case of the various Classes that have been mention'd, and therefore they become the proper Subjects of Mirth and Ridicule.

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